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SUBJECT: OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL: RESPONSE TO REPORT OF
ODIHR DIRECTOR LENARCIC

¶1. (U) Post is authorized to present the following statement
at the Permanent Council meeting in Vienna on March 19.

Begin text:

Madam Chairwoman,

Thank you, Ambassador Lenarcic for your comprehensive report.
The United States strongly supports ODIHR, which has earned
its place as a key institution in the OSCE's efforts to
promote democratic development, human rights and free and
fair elections.

At a time when core human dimension commitments are
increasingly being called into question, as was so
convincingly argued in ODIHR's November 10, 2006 Common
Responsibility Report submitted to the OSCE Ministerial
Council, the role played by the ODIHR in promoting respect
for human rights, providing objective assessments of the
conduct of elections and supporting the development of
democratic institutions, is as critical as it has ever been.
Ambassador Lenarcic, the United States encourages ODIHR to
focus even more sharply on those core elements of its
mandate. In doing so, the United States suggests that the
ODIHR should prioritize those areas where OSCE commitments
are the most clearly defined, and that ODIHR projects should
focus on those countries where the gap between commitments
and practices as well as the potential for progress are the
greatest.

The ODIHR should continue its valuable reporting, exemplified
in its joint assessment with the HCNM of human rights in the
war-affected areas of Georgia. Serious human rights and
humanitarian concerns remain in the zone of conflict, and
will continue if not promptly addressed. Accordingly, we
encourage the ODIHR and the HCNM to return to Georgia, and
especially to the Akhalgori region of South Ossetia, to
monitor efforts to implement the report's recommendations.

ODIHR's well-deserved reputation for election monitoring is
directly attributable to its well-known, objective criteria
and procedures for election observation. All participating
States have an interest in opposing any effort to undermine
ODIHR's autonomy and impartiality, as well as any attempts to
turn back the clock on the progress we have made in
democratic practices within the OSCE region. The United
States has been, and will continue to be, in the forefront of
States protecting ODIHR from political interference. In this
regard, we believe that the ODIHR has done an excellent job
in fully responding to the taskings given in Brussels
Ministerial Decision 19/06.

We were pleased also to learn that there is a prospect for
the resumption of the usually amicable cooperation and
collaboration in election observation missions between the
ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly based on the 1997
Cooperation Agreement. Unlike other parliamentary assemblies
that may join OSCE election observation missions, the OSCE
Parliamentary Assembly is in a privileged status since it
shares a leadership role with the ODIHR. We appreciate the

efforts of the Greek Chairmanship in this regard, as well as the constructive approach of both ODIHR and the Parliamentary Assembly in these discussions. We continue to believe that both of these OSCE institutions play a critical role each providing unique and necessary expertise, and that our Organization is best served when we all speak with one voice and work together in a spirit of complementary partnership, cooperation and collaboration.

The universally respected ODIHR objectivity and expertise and professionalism in election monitoring can and should be made available to countries outside the OSCE, especially to our Partners for Cooperation, whose fate greatly matters to our common security. We note that Rangin Dadfar Spanta, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, invited the OSCE to support the upcoming Presidential Election in that country, as it has in 2004 and 2005. We encourage the Chairmanship and the ODIHR to respond positively and dynamically to this request, and to make OSCE able to bring appropriate elections support to Afghanistan.

The Democracy program projects are well designed and implemented and provide emerging democracies with much needed technical assistance in promoting the rule of law, developing transparent legislative processes, and building civil society. With our increased focus on strengthening democratic institutions and respect for the rule of law in

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2009, on the basis of Helsinki Ministerial Decision 7/08, we anticipate much greater activity by this program.

In our view, the Human Rights program should focus more on the broad fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and freedom of religion. We look forward to the upcoming Supplemental Human Dimension Meeting on Freedom of Religion which is to have a rights based focus. As was clearly shown in the recent roundtable on discrimination against Christians, a rights-based focus on the freedom of religion has been long neglected by the ODIHR. The Human Rights program should develop technical assistance and training programs for the emerging democracies on how to ensure that fundamental freedoms are respected.

ODIHR's tolerance work should focus on the priority areas of combating intolerance in those areas where the participating States have reached consensus - combating anti-Semitism, intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, Christians and members of other religions, and racism, xenophobia and related intolerance. We also believe the Director of ODIHR should be prepared to highlight key concerns and current issues that may arise in areas covered by ODIHR's mandate. In this regard, we applaud your February 27 statement of concern about continuing attacks targeting Roma. We urge ODIHR to energize and strengthen its activities in responding to and ameliorating continued discrimination and attacks on Roma in the OSCE region.

In our view, the ODIHR effort to deal with hate crimes should focus on realistic, specific targeted initiatives that will help address the problem of core definitions, model legislation to meet OSCE commitments, data collection methods based on this model legislation, and a sharing of best practices.

Civil society participation is the foundation of the effective review of the implementation of human dimension commitments by participating States. ODIHR must set an example of inclusiveness of NGOs and transparency at all ODIHR-organized events and meetings.

We look forward to working with you Ambassador Lenarcic, and the participating States, in the implementation of our OSCE Human Dimension commitments. We applaud ODIHR for its excellent work, and you will continue to have our full support in the coming years.

Thank you Madam Chairwoman.
CLINTON